

		<h2 style="text-align: center;">Shawnee National Forest</h2> <p style="text-align: center;"> USDA – Forest Service 50 Hwy 145 South Harrisburg, Illinois 62946 Phone: 618-253-7114 or 800-MY-WOODS Website: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Shawnee Twitter: http://twitter.com/shawnee </p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Caring for the Land and Serving People</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Contact: Amanda Patrick (618) 253-7114</p>
<h1 style="text-align: center;">News Release</h1>		

Prescribed Fire Plans for the Shawnee National Forest

HARRISBURG, IL – October 11, 2012 – With the arrival of fall, the Shawnee National Forest (NF) will begin its prescribed burn season, and with this, the Shawnee NF Supervisor is announcing 32 planned prescribed burns on approximately 5,000 to 10,000 acres in the next fiscal year that will begin October 1st. Operations are tentatively scheduled to begin in October and continue through April 2013.

In recent years, the Forest has seen an increase in the use of prescribed fire in land management. These prescribed fires are performed under appropriate weather conditions, during the spring and early fall, when the fires can be managed to benefit the land.

Prescribed fire is used to meet several management goals and will approximate historic fire occurrence. It will:

- Maintain oaks and hickories as an integral part of the forest cover. Fire creates openings that oaks and hickories seedlings need to gain access to light in order to grow. Without fire, shade tolerant beeches and maples will take over and eventually replace the oak/hickory stands. Through the forest planning effort it was decided to maintain the historic oak/hickory forest.
- Maintain openlands. Using prescribed fire to maintain openlands allows forest managers to perpetuate prairie and savannah remnants found on the forest. These remnant plant communities provide habitat for several early-successional song bird species, such as Henslow's sparrow and the loggerhead shrike. Maintaining these openings with prescribed fire increases biodiversity in both plant and animal species.
- Reduce wildfire hazard and damage. The use of prescribed fire reduces debris collected on the forest floor so that should a wildfire happen, it will be less intense, thereby causing less damage.

To learn more about prescribed burning on the Shawnee, please contact Scott Crist or Forest Paukert, located at the Supervisor's Office in Harrisburg, at (618) 253-7114.

Administered by the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the Shawnee National Forest is one of 155 national forests nationwide. As the only national forest in Illinois, the Shawnee offers numerous avenues for connecting with the natural world through its 280,000 acres of varied landscape. Whether your interests lie more in outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking or camping, or include learning about the unique natural and cultural heritage of southern Illinois, the fields, forests and streams of the Shawnee welcome you. To discover more about the Shawnee National Forest, visit <http://www.fs.usda.gov/shawnee> and follow us on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/shawnee>. National information about the U.S. Forest Service can be found at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/>.